

OPENING STATEMENT FOR DR. FAXON PAYNE

Good Afternoon Senators:

I am pleased to be invited to appear here today and hope that I can convince you to enact legislation to abolish aging. We who are elderly could do without it. I am a retired radiologist and medical school professor emeritus from Vanderbilt University. I turn 78 this month and I live in Nashville, Tennessee.

On February 5th of 1999 I was treated for an early cancer of the prostate while under general anesthesia. I was discharged that day and a few days later developed "walking pneumonia." I was treated with antibiotics, but as it turned out, the treatment was inadequate. Approximately a week after my surgery, I was up very early to go to work at the hospital and was working a crossword puzzle in our bedroom. I looked up and asked my wife who was the man in the doorway. Since there was no one in the doorway, she knew I was hallucinating. My brain was oxygen deprived. My wife immediately called my internist and was told to take me to the ER now! When we arrived at the ER I walked in and collapsed in cardiac and respiratory arrest. I underwent CPR for 10 minutes, then was placed on a respirator where I remained for the next 12 days in a coma. During those 12 days on life support I lost 30 pounds. I was treated with IV antibiotics, blood transfusions, steroids, and both IV and tube nutrition.

I had developed sepsis, or as we used to call it, "blood poisoning." Sepsis is an extremely serious and often deadly bacterial infection. It can start with any common infection, more often in the lungs and rapidly progresses to multiple organ failure. It must be recognized in its earliest stages for treatment to be successful. Seniors are even more at risk of contracting sepsis because the majority of people in the ICU are above the age of 65. They must be treated aggressively right away because their immune system response is reduced.

Dr. Wes Ely of Vanderbilt University is a doctor who has done extensive research on sepsis. Luckily for me, he just happened to be in the emergency room when I collapsed. He recognized my condition as sepsis and immediately began aggressive treatment for sepsis. I was a lucky one. Other seniors have not been so fortunate. Some doctors misdiagnose Sepsis in seniors, but worse yet are the doctors who recognize it and don't treat it aggressively.

Luckily for me, I survived sepsis and lead a happy, active and productive life. I workout daily at the gym and with my wife's excellent cooking, I now weigh 50 pounds more than when I entered the hospital.

Before I close, I want to share these thoughts with you. Many times, the health complaints of seniors are brushed off as "well, you should expect this at your age." Why? Why should an older person not expect to have the same treatment as someone half his or her age? We are still human beings with feelings and we have skills to offer society. We do not like to be shunted aside as worthless hulks or has-beens. I think all of the health profession should stop and think before dismissing the health concerns of the elderly with comments like "you have to expect this at your age."

Thank you.